Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC)

Communication Unit Training Workgroup Update – COML

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Outline

- Overview of COML
- COML Training
- Key Implementations in other States
- Wildfire Qualifications Review Committee Model
- Committee Recommendations
- Next Steps

COML Overview

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The Communications Unit Leader (COML) is a position under the Logistics Section of the Incident Command System (ICS).

The COML is responsible for developing plans for the effective use of incident communications equipment and facilities, managing the distribution of communications equipment to incident personnel, and coordinating the installation and testing of communications equipment.

COMLs are important during all-hazards emergency operations, because they significantly improve communications across the multiple radio systems, disciplines, jurisdictions and agencies responding to a wide variety of incident types.

Type III All Hazards Incident Characteristics

1. Activation of some or all of the Command and General Staff positions, as well as activation of some or all of the Division/Group Supervisor and/or Unit Leader level positions.
2. Deployment of a Type III Incident Management Team or incident command organization to manage:
   - Initial action incidents with a significant number of resources
   - An extended attack incident until containment/control is achieved, or
   - An expanding incident until transition to a Type I or II team.
3. Extension into multiple operational periods.
4. Development of a written Incident Action Plan for each operational period (as necessary).

Type III COML Training Overview

COML Training has been provided by the US Dept of Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Communications through the Interoperable Technical Assistance Program (DHS/OEC ICTAP).

In lieu of a National Registry and/or Federal certification process, states collect documentation on student qualifications.

The Federal Government has left it up to each state to determine how its COMLs are credentialed.

National Training Status

- OEC's Training Modules
  - COML Training – the rollout provided 66 classes nationwide
  - COML Train the Trainer – the rollout provided 9 classes
  - COMT – Alpha and Beta classes held, materials now being revised, rollout of 6 classes nationwide is expected this spring
- Over 1600 completed OEC's COML training as of December 2009
- Seventy-four students completed the COML Train the Trainer classes
- Forty-five Trainers are currently on OEC's approved COML instructor list

Training & Credentialing

- OEC has completed the COML rollout and will not sponsor future classes
- Future COML training will be:
  - State- sponsored using OEC-approved instructors
  - Funded locally or through Technical Assistance requests
- Nationally, the number of COMLs trained who complete task books is low – estimates: 6% to 12%
- Credentialing varies greatly from state to state, with many states having no credentialing program

National Policy Recommendations

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Developed as part of the initial COML Training Evaluation

- Pre-qualifications for applicants
  - Validated public safety communications background with exposure to field operations
  - Fundamental public safety communications technology, supervisory and personnel management skills
- Experience within the previous three years may be used to meet taskbook requirements
- Approval authorities should be limited to a small pool of supervisory personnel or individuals with relevant experience.
- COMLs should participate in a full-scale exercise, incident or event every three years to maintain qualification

Ohio: COML Credentialing

- Certification is centralized under the SIEC
- Applicants are reviewed with selection focusing on leadership capability
- Candidates must have a personal reference available for questions and document participation in three significant incidents and in exercises
- A 3-man committee, an 11-man committee and the SIEC approve each applicant and the Ohio Emergency Management Department issues the COML certificate
- To maintain their designation, COMLs document their participation as a COML in one significant event and complete one training annually
- Ohio plans to draw from COML training material to develop a six-hour class suitable for dispatchers and field users supporting COMLs

Minnesota COML Certification

- Applicants must participate as a COML in one NIMS Type III event and provide related documentation
- NIMS COMLs, designated agency heads or incident commanders provide the Final Evaluator's Verification for the Taskbook
- An Agency Certification comes from the Designated Agency Head employing the candidate
- Regional Interoperability Coordinators, the Regional Advisory Committee and the Statewide Interoperability Program Manager participate in the review and certification process
- When the Statewide Interoperability Program Manager signs off on the Taskbook, the Candidate is certified for three years
- Recertification requires participation in one NIMS Type III drill, exercise, incident or event at least once every three years

Maine: COML Recognition

- Goals set for the state:
  - Two COMLs for each county
  - Two COMLs for each metro area
- In addition to State and COML Training, requirements include:
  - Public Safety background with exposure to field operations
  - Public Safety communications, technical and personnel management skills
  - Recommendation by County Emergency Manager or Incident Commander
- Maine Emergency Management Agency tracks recognized (not certified) individuals
- Each County maintain records of its recognized COMLs

Overview of State Programs

- OEC reports that many States have not yet developed COML credentialing programs
- States like Ohio, with its MARCS statewide 800 MHz system, tend toward a highly centralized statewide COML Certification
- States with clearly defined regions, like Minnesota, have regional bodies actively working to certify COMLs
- Maine relies heavily on County Emergency Managers to track COMLs who are “recognized” rather than “certified”
- New York’s Statewide Interoperability Coordinator reports that no agency has yet stepped forward to develop a qualification program

Arizona Wildfire Qualification Review Committee Model

- Documentation from several other states indicates that they have no crosswalk between Wildfire COML and All Hazards Type III COML credentialing
- The Arizona State Wildfire Qualification Review committee is composed of Local Fire Department/District representatives from across the State and State Forestry Division personnel
- The Committee reviews applicant qualifications (training, experience, fitness and performance ratings) at semi-annual meetings and approves or denies Red Card certification for Wildfire Operations and Command Positions

[Note: Wildfire Qualification documents (Bylaws and Guides) and record-keeping practices are useful as possible models.]

Workgroup Considerations

- The Workgroup feels that in Arizona because of the vast number of disparate systems and liability considerations, that a decentralized model for credentialing should be recommended.
- The Workgroup feels that each agency knows its systems and personnel best and is ultimately responsible for their personnel's actions. Therefore, it feels each agency should be responsible for their own COML credentialing.
- Unlike the Wildfire qualification board who must evaluate a single set of skills on similar equipment statewide, the Workgroup feels it would be difficult for a central committee to evaluate the knowledge and skills of personnel on multiple disparate systems statewide.
- Originally the Workgroup thought a central committee could provide at least recommendations to local jurisdictions; however, upon further reflection its members feel that would be quite difficult because of the vast differences among systems operating in Arizona.

Proposed AZ COML Classifications

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Candidate Title	Candidate Description	Relationship to Credentialing System
Ad hoc COML	*Has COML experience but has not completed the COML Training or Taskbook*	*Has no records on file but can be notified of and may participate in continuing COML training and exercises*
Type III Communications Leader Trainee (COML Trainee)	*Has completed COML Training*	*COML Training Certificate on file with the PSIC Office*
Type III Communications Unit Leader Candidate (COML Candidate)	*Has completed COML Training and is actively progressing through Taskbook Completion*	*COML Training Certificate on file with the PSIC Office along with the Candidate's notification that COML Taskbook work is in progress*
Arizona Regional Type III Communications Unit Leader (Regional COML)	*Has completed COML Training and Taskbook*	*COML Training Certificate , Agency Certification and completed Taskbook on file with the PSIC Office; Entered in the resource database as a Regional COML*
Arizona Statewide Type III Communications Unit Leader (Statewide COML)	*A Regional COML who has completed the additional training and tasks specified for designation as a Statewide COML*	*COML Training Certificate , Agency Certification, completed Taskbook and documentation of continuing education and experience on file with the PSIC Office; Entered in the resource database as both a Regional and Statewide COML*

Arizona COML Recommendations

- AZ Regional COMLs
  - Complete training and taskbook
  - Credentialed by their respective agencies
- AZ Statewide COMLs
  - Are AZ Regional COMLs credentialed by their respective agencies
  - Are centrally cross-trained to meet needs throughout the state, e.g. Rural/Urban, emergency medical/fire/law enforcement, use of Statewide interoperability assets
  - Have initial and continuing education requirements
  - Must participate in Type III NIMS drills, exercises and incidents to maintain their COML credential

Next Steps

- Further Committee discussions to finalize definitions of different levels of AZ COMLs
- Development of a Statewide COML Registry
- Development of Outreach and Education Materials regarding COML Program in AZ
- Identification of Grant Dollars to enable additional personnel to attend COML Training
- Identification of Events/Exercises that will enable COML candidates to complete their taskbooks to become Regional COMLs
- Committee discussions regarding centralized training on statewide interoperability assets for Regional COMLs who wish to become Statewide COMLs; identification of funds to support

Questions?

Further Discussion